

The Rocky River Watershed

The Rocky River is one of the most popular rivers in Northeast Ohio. It draws tens of thousands of visitors each year. People fish the serene pools, hike the winding banks, and marvel at the River's beauty in all of the seasons. The River is a valuable resource that we have had to fight hard to save. Now, we have to save it from ourselves.

The Rocky River is impacted by pollution from many sources-everything from our international airport to our own backyard. Strides have been made in addressing some of these problems. We have seen nine sewage treatment plants shut down because they could not adequately treat our wastewater. Those wastewater plants that remain have been tremendously improved.

However, problems still remain in the Rocky River. These are caused primarily by what is termed 'nonpoint sources of pollution'. Nonpoint source pollution is generated by the way that we use the land. It occurs when rainwater washes chemicals that we put or leak onto the land into our lakes and streams. It is seepage from septic tanks that are not being properly cared for. It is waste from livestock and pets that gets washed into our waters. It's a lot of little things that we could do better at if we tried.

The biggest problem with the River now is that we love it too much—too many of us want to live and build in its watershed. We need to learn how to do this without hurting the River. The Rocky River Watershed Council has been formed to help us as we try to help the River. It will guide environmental management agencies as they intensify their efforts to prevent nonpoint source pollution from impacting the River.

What is the Rocky River Watershed?

Officially, the Rocky River Watershed consists of 664 stream miles and drains approximately 294 square miles of Northeast Ohio. In reality, the Rocky River Watershed is so much more than just the land area that drains into the Rocky River. It contains Hinckley Lake, Wallace Lake, Baldwin Lake, Coe Lake, Lake Medina, and Wildwood Lake.

It is home to Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, the NASA Glenn Research Center, Baldwin Wallace College, and the Western Campus of Cuyahoga Community College. It is the Rocky River Reservation, the Mill Stream Run Reservation and the Hinckley Reservation of Cleveland Metroparks. It is Plum Creek Park, Allardale Park, the Lester Rail Trail, and the Princess Ledges Nature Preserve operated by the Medina County Park District. It is the Lorain County MetroParks and the new Columbia Reservation being established along the West Branch of the river. It is numerous city parks including Coe Lake that is the showpiece of the City of Berea.

Watershed residents include the Hinckley Buzzards, herds of whitetail deer, coyotes, wild turkeys, flocks of ducks and geese, great blue herons, an occasional bald eagle visitor, and, maybe someday soon, river otters. They also include more than a quarter of a million people living in four counties (Summit, Medina, Lorain, and Cuyahoga).